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DEATH'S PEDAGOGY

COKIE ROBERTS THE FALL OF THE PHOENIX
SISYPHUS POST-WATERGATE RECONSTRUCTION—I
MICHAEL NOVAK OTHER BOSTONIANS, PROPERLY CONSIDERED
COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR. DR. HECKLE AND MR. CHIDE
JAMES FINN . . . THESE THREE: FAITH, HOPE AND DEATH
GERALD WEALES SOCIAL DRAMA OF THE 1930s
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NEWS & VIEWS

Summit Summing-Up

An unqualifiedly negative position has been taken on Threshold Test Ban agreement of the last Nixon summit in Moscow by the Arms Control Association, which has urged President Ford not to ask Senate ratification of the pact.

The Arms Control Association is a non-partisan membership organization dedicated to promoting understanding of effective policies and programs in arms control and disarmament. Its position was made known in the summer issue of *Arms Control Today*, just published.

The Threshold Test Ban provides that neither the U.S. nor the USSR shall test nuclear weapons underground above a yield of 150 kilotons (ten times the Hiroshima bomb). It exempts "peaceful" nuclear explosions, and it shall not take effect until March 31,1976.

Those three features raise serious questions about the good intentions of the two parties, the Arms Control Association charges. It explains:

First, by agreeing on a complete test ban, the two powers invite doubts about seriousness of their ten-year old commitment to end all nuclear testing explicitly set forth in the 1963 Partial Test Ban and reaffirmed in the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty. The size of the threshold permits continued testing of most of the weapons each side is likely to want to develop in the future.

Second, by allowing "peaceful" explosions of any size to continue, the treaty contains a loophole of gigantic proportions. An explosion, peaceful or warlike, is an explosion, and the technical requirements for the two are indistinguishable from one another. If the case were otherwise, India would not have aroused the skepticism it did about the announcement that it had exploded a "peaceful" nuclear device last May.

Finally, by setting the effective date for the ban at nearly two years from now, the parties set the stage for an orgy of intensive nuclear testing. Indeed, barely a week after the treaty was signed, the Atomic Energy Commission was reported to be preparing a budget request to Congress for nearly $100 million in supplemental funds for new nuclear test programs, to beat the March, 1976 deadline.

The Arms Control Association concludes that the Threshold Test Ban agreement "has dealt a serious setback to the cause of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, and therefore constitutes a grave threat to world peace and security."

The Association adds that the President should not submit the treaty to the Senate for its "consent to ratification," but instead should instruct the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva to undertake serious negotiations in that multi-lateral forum towards banning *all* nuclear tests.

'Post' vs. 'Times'

An Aug. 25 *Boston Globe* Sunday-magazine feature on the supereditors of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* led with a Watergate-performance assessment of the two publications. The article, by *Globe*man Robert Lenzer, opened:

"'Eat your heart out, Abe Rosenthal.'

"The words were spoken by Ben Bradlee, the swashbuckling executive editor of the *Washington Post*, one evening before his two star investigative reporters, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, scooped the *New York Times* with an exclusive Watergate blockbuster.

"The words still make *New York Times* managing editor Abe Rosenthal wince and the furrows in his forehead deepen. 'I'd prefer that Bradlee eat his heart out rather than me,' says the man whose newspaper was outdone for the first time on the most incredible tale of political corruption in American history.

"The *Post*'s vanguard position in breaking the Watergate story had created a confrontation between the White House and the press, and had catapulted the Washington paper to far greater fame across the world — intensifying the rivalry with the *Times* and between the intensely competitive editors of the two daily newspapers.

"In New York, even the publisher of the *Times*, Arthur 'Punch' Sulzberger, found the experience of coming in second slightly humiliating. 'It touched me very deeply when I read in the *New York Times* the name of the *Washington Post*,' says Sulzberger seriously, referring to the *Times*' unusual need to attribute stories about Watergate to its rival in the nation's capital, a city where the *Times* has over 50 reporters and editors.

"The *Times* leaders believe they have made a comeback. Abe Rosenthal thinks his paper caught up in the Watergate sweepstakes and 'is, generally speaking, ahead now. I don't want to sound boastful, but I can't help it —we cover the world, and the two papers cannot be compared,' he says.

"Sulzberger adds, 'We had to run a long way to catch up, but we've done it.'

"No one else interviewed for this comparison of the two most powerful newspaper editors in the nation believes that the *Times* has made up the ground lost in the first newsbreaks of the Watergate affair. In fact, one *Times*man calls his paper's performance 'the classic failure of modern American journalism'."

Earl the Pearl

Agriculture Department's Earl Butz expounding on the joys of the free enterprise system and food stamps:

"With cash assistance (food stamp program) you can plan and do your own buying. The food buying power will be spread out into the country instead of centering it here in Washington. You can make savings by dealing in local markets, and just as important, federal money will be returned to local economies where it can do the most good.

"This is a move back to the sort of economic freedom that helped develop this country. It is a return to the free enterprise system that has produced the abundance Americans now enjoy. Individual incentives and individual freedom have always been the backbone of this nation."

The comments came in a speech before the American School Food Service Association on Aug. 8. It didn't hurt in official Washington. On Aug. 29, President Ford asked Butz to stay on indefinitely at Agriculture.

No Truer Words

Wiley T. Buchanan, frequently mentioned during the Nixon years as a likely nominee to the Court of St. James's, reflected on the new Vice President-designate at a late summer party for Newport swells:

"I think he's lost a lot of liberal attitudes. The liberal attitudes he used to have were mostly for window dressing, don't you think? Besides, anybody with that much money couldn't be too liberal."

How much money is there in Nelson Rockefeller's sock? The upcoming confirmation hearings should produce an accounting, and according to *New Times* magazine, close Rockefeller associates are already sweating out that revelation. "There is one theory that has Rockefeller earning $175,000 a day," *NT* quotes a source, "and it's going to be a little unreal for people to accept that."

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Catholic Civil Rights

Lansing, Mich.

To the Editors: Michael Novak's sobering "Jewish Agenda, Catholic Agenda" [June 28] is, I think, exactly right. One need only be pursuing graduate studies at a secular university to recognize that anti-Catholic sentiment is increasing. It's perfectly OK, to be sure, if one *was* a Catholic, so long as one now has a healthy sense of humor about "all that." . . .

One thing in particular, for me at least, makes the hostility Novak discerns especially dismaying. The vaunted community of concern built around issues of human rights, a community that has been the focus of many Catholics for the last decade, gives precious little evidence of recognizing why Catholics are struggling for the lives of the unborn. Indeed it seems to be unable to comprehend why the issue is even put in these terms.

The only hope is to persist, like Novak, in calling attention to majoritarian biases, however unpleasant they are, and continue to work for a society that recognizes the dignity of human beings at every stage of their development. JAMES G. HANINK

Milwaukee, Wisc.

To the Editors . . . I am in total agreement with Novak's proposal [June 28] to come to grips with the problem of securing the equal rights of American minorities. He proposes that we "more intelligently organize ourselves," that we "more sensitively help one another," and thus, hopefully, be able "to check and to chasten monolithic power" and to make it "pluralistic in practice" and "accountable to all groups in America." . . .

Catholics, as Father Theodore Hesburgh recently pointed out, are beginning "to stir, to feel set upon, ignored, even badly used and unappreciated." A year ago the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

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JOSEPH O'ROURKE, EX-S.J.

In expelling the controversial political activist, Father Joseph O'Rourke, S.J., from the Society of Jesus within less than two weeks of his performing an unauthorized baptism in Marlboro, Massachusetts, the Jesuit superiors in New York and Rome have made a decision that concerns not just the internal workings of one religious order but in many ways the future character of the American church. We feel that the decision, at least in its timing and manner of execution, was a mistake. It cuts short the apostolate of a unique individual whose career has been, to many people, proof of the church's social commitment and of the Society's wise tolerance of a creative maverick.

If the Jesuits were merely a private club like the Union League or a secret society like the Masons, a member's dismissal would hardly be a public issue. But religious orders claim more for themselves and the sign value of their lives. By their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and their spirituality of service, they say they witness to God's loving presence in the world. They run international networks of schools, universities, missions and parishes supported by the benefices of the rich and the coins of the generous poor. In this sense, religious orders are a public trust. If the people are to believe them, their corporate actions must appear as well as be just; and the expulsion of a well-known Jesuit who has become a sign of social justice—as well as a sign of contradiction—affects us all.

First, who is Joe O'Rourke? Depending on who describes him, he is a charming, brilliant, irritating, imprudent, young (36) priest. Schooled in the spirit of radical organizer Saul Alinsky as well as the spirit of Saint Ignatius, his Jesuit career, which was recently described in the book, *These Priests Stay*, has been a string of "actions"—dramatic gestures staged to draw attention to social-moral issues. During the Vietnam war he protested by wrecking the Dow Chemical offices in Washington. In the middle of his own ordination, before embracing Cardinal Terence Cooke, he protested the Cardinal's complicity in the war. Recently, while visiting a life-prisoner in Sing Sing, he performed an unauthorized marriage. For several years he has been Catholic Coordinator at the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, trying to get churches to focus their investment policies on social ills. Finally, as a director of a group called Catholics for a Free

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Choice, an organization that supports the woman's right to an abortion, he flew to the Archdiocese of Boston, against the wishes of his superior, to baptize three-month-old Nathaniel Ryan Morreale who had been refused baptism by his parish priests because of his mother's support of the abortion cause.

Seldom have so many moral, political and theological issues come together at the baptism of one child. For generations Catholics have been led to believe that their children should be baptized as soon as conveniently possible. It is a relatively new and hardly-ever-applied position that the beliefs and morals of the parents should be scrutinized before baptism is granted. This might be a good idea—*if* the church also teaches from the pulpit as well as in the seminary why baptism is *not* really necessary and if the parishes also refuse to baptize the children of mafia leaders, slum landlords, racists and warmongers. In this situation we feel that *someone* (no priest was necessary and Father O'Rourke's ceremony was no more or less valid than anyone else's) should have baptized Nathaniel without allowing the sacrament to become a political football in the abortion debate; and registered it later when the shouting had stopped.

But what of the swift and extraordinarily severe punishment of the baptizer? Some background: Father O'Rourke had been warned after the ordination and Sing Sing incidents that future actions of this kind might have serious consequences; he was reminded to follow strictly the consulting procedures outlined in the Decrees of the 31st General Congregation and the Province guidelines if any action was planned. O'Rourke maintains he did begin consulting fellow Jesuits, a moral theologian and a canon lawyer on August 13 when he received the baptism request by phone while at a Jesuit Missions conference in Saint Paul. On August 19, at a long midnight conference on the eve of the baptism, he met with his immediate superior, Father Frederick O'Connor, S.J., of the Woodstock 98th Street community, and the community consultors. At the end, O'Connor told O'Rourke in writing that he was "asking" him not to do it and telling him he "did not want" him to do it. He did it.

O'Rourke's defenders point out that the directive did not include the legal phrase, "I order you under the vow of obedience," which a religious interprets as an ultimatum, and that, contrary to some accounts, there was no direct prohibition from the New York Provincial, Father Eamon Taylor, S.J.; furthermore, the Woodstock consultors did not see this as an issue on which someone should be expelled. The Provincial's defenders answer that the obligation of obedience is always there, whether or not an emphatic formula is used; and that O'Rourke's pattern of activity indicates that a life of religious obedience is not for him.

On Thursday, August 29, O'Rourke was called to the Provincial headquarters, read a series of 20 questions concerning the incident and informed that dismissal procedures had begun. O'Rourke, stunned, argues that there were no written charges and that he had no opportunity to include a written defense when the papers were telexed to Rome. The Woodstock community cabled Rome asking that the process be stopped at least for a while and wrote to the Province protesting their exclusion from the deliberations, the extreme secrecy and speed, and the lack of time for defense.

In less than a week O'Rourke was out. His dismissal leaves him still determined to stay and he is appealing his case to the Sacred Congregation of Religious. It leaves his community, whose members are well aware of his faults, convinced he has been treated unfairly. And it leaves many of his contemporaries, an age-group trained when the spirit of renewal was at its peak, wondering about their own futures, and asking if this is a signal that the Society is backing off from an attitude of openness and reform.

With this in mind, if historians ever do look back on the O'Rourke case, what will they say? In 1949 a more notable Jesuit, the highly idiosyncratic Father Leonard Feeney, S.J., was expelled on the issue of obedience after he taught what the church had actually once held—that, literally, outside the church there was no salvation. In retrospect, his expulsion could be interpreted as an insecure American church's attempt to prove its acceptability to a pluralistic society. Today, many of those who remember Father Feeney, including those who reject his odd views, wish the Society had found some way to keep him. Already there are those who see the Society's reaction to O'Rourke as a symptom of its own corporate identity crisis: an uneasy religious order shaken by the changes and free-wheeling dissidence of the late 1960s is trying to clamp the lid on, to head off a revolution by making an example of a rebel.

In short, if Father O'Rourke does not belong in the Society of Jesus, this is neither the issue on which to get him out nor the way to do it. His "actions" have ruffled the feathers of the authorities but they have really hurt no one—while some other priests, alas, do neither evil nor good and live on in good standing. He has brought trouble; he has also brought elemental justice—the war *was* wrong, prisoners *should* be allowed to marry, a child *should* be baptized—and a kind of peace. If a religious order's internal procedures do not grant its members what the ordinary American citizen would recognize as due process it should realize that this is a source of scandal in a democratic society and move quickly to amend its mistakes and its laws. If O'Rourke is, in the words of the 31st General Congregation, "a man who, time after time, is unable to obey with a good conscience," and "should take thought regarding some other path of life in which he can serve God with greater tranquility," let him be led to this point through a process that he, his community, and the rest of the American Catholic people can believe.

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Greece: The Fall Of the Phoenix

As democracy creeps home to Greece it carries fresh air in which to breathe deeply and speak freely. In this new atmosphere of freedom people are asking questions: how did it all happen; what happens next internally in Greece; and how will that affect its relationship with the United States?

Greeks have experienced great emotional shifts since the hot Monday morning when word came that there had been a coup on Cyprus. Some Athenians even broke their accustomed silence to dare whisper their distress that the military government here in Athens would overthrow Makarios. One waiter told me, "The Greek people are against this action. It is the work of the military regime." No one was surprised when the Turks invaded. The Greeks mobilized and the mood grew dimmer, with no one wanting to fight a war for the despised junta. But hatred of the Turks runs deep and the announcement of a ceasefire brought relief but no joy. The military tried to lay the blame on foreign powers. Police looked by as thugs destroyed the ground floor of the British Embassy and roughed up foreign newspersons, including me. And one normally hospitable neighbor screamed at me, "Tell your country to stop supporting the barbaric Turks, who have never done anything for civilization." But the Greek people knew their own military leaders had caused the problem in the first place and the generals knew it too.

Several versions are told of how and why the generals relinquished power, some include a heavy dose of American pressure. Good sources here describe a scenario where the more realistic generals, who had opposed the Cyprus coup from the beginning, realized the mess the country was in and thought that only a popularly supported government could extricate it. They forced Gen. Ioannides out and called the politicians in. When Former Premier Constantine Karamanlis returned to lead a civilian government for the first time in seven-and-a-half years, it was to a wildly joyful city. There was little evidence that night of bitterness or revenge. When the President, Gen. Gizikis, arrived at the Parliament building, the few boos were shouted down by cheers of "All together now." Some cries of "Down with the Junta" could be heard, but the general mood was one of happy hopefulness and much of that spirit remains alive today.

Karamanlis moves certainly but cautiously—some on the left say too cautiously—but most people are willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. Most of those who are cynical about the new regime don't live here, or weren't here under the dictatorship. Changes show up everywhere. Previously banned newspapers publish freely. The Press Ministry, which used to call reporters only to tell them to leave the country, now keeps us informed. The abhorred symbol of the military regime, a Phoenix rising from flames guarded by a soldier, formerly adorned public hearings, roadsides and hillsides as pervasively as "Jesus Saves" signs in the American South. It has now disappeared. One recently returned exile said to me, "Greece hasn't changed since I was last home, the people still argue passionately about politics." What he didn't know is that they hadn't for seven years. People kept their voices muted in cafes and nobody talked on the telephone. All of this is not to say that Karamanlis has made the generals disappear. They are still there, waiting in the barracks for any sign of political unrest. And this government faces problems which could cause it. It inherited a disastrous situation in Cyprus and a highly inflationary economy. And it must add to those the pressure that the political left is expected to exert.

Karamanlis is well aware of that pressure and has taken steps to head it off: granting amnesty to all political prisoners, allowing Communist newspapers to publish, including members of some leftist groups in the Cabinet, overthrowing the top figures in the military command, and firing Gen. Ioannides. Two days before the only politician who had spoken out against the new government, leftist leader Andreas Papandreou, arrived in Greece, Karamanlis had undercut his main political message by withdrawing Greece from the military wing of NATO. And even Papandreou's triumphant return to tumultuous crowds received secondary play in the newspapers to Karamanlis' headlined "Oxi!" or "No!" to Henry Kissinger's invitation to Washington. Much to the surprise and private dismay of the left their traditional conservative enemy, Karamanlis, is moving to take over their most popular political stance—anti-Americanism.

Dislike and distrust of America has grown in Greece through the years as the Nixon Administration endorsed the military regime. And it's been greatly inflamed by what Greeks see as American support of Turkey on Cyprus. They don't understand why the U.S. didn't prevent the invasion in the first place and ceasefire violations later. Many Greeks believe that the CIA installed the original military coup of George Papadopoulas. And a *New York Times* story saying the CIA had been told to curtail its role in Greece has been circulated here as evidence of widespread CIA activity. Regardless of who engineered the junta, there is no question that America backed it. The government saw only one U.S. interest in Greece: to maintain the military bases. No heed was given to the moral question of supporting a dictatorship, and the U.S. acted as though it expected the junta to stay in power forever. Karamanlis and most other former politicians were ignored. Lower echelon officers in the American Embassy were specifically discouraged from making contacts with persons who are

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now in the Greek Cabinet. (Embassy officials weren't the only ones sluffing off the old politicians. On the day before the change in government Evangelos Averoff stopped by one of the news agencies to look at the wires. A reporter asked him to step aside so people could work. The next day he became Minister of Defense.) Some diplomats always warned that the civilians would resent the American attitude if they returned to office. And now they seem to be vindicated.

U.S. Ambassador Henry Tasca was the first to pay for the State Department's mistakes which he helped formulate. But at this point it doesn't matter who is in office either in the embassy here or in the White House at home. The specific targets of the hate might be Henry Kissinger (the demonstrators shout "Kissinger Murderer" and "Kissinger Give Back Your Nobel"), and the American bases, but after a daily and often irresponsible press campaign against the U.S., any American will do. In addition to large and sometimes violent demonstrations all of us have personal incidents to report in a country where we are normally treated with the utmost kindness; and, of course, the fury culminated in the killing of the U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus, Rodger Davies. In some ways the shooting was cathartic. Greeks were generally shocked and much of the heat has gone out of the desire to demonstrate. But that is not to say that the anti-Americanism has died down. Many Greeks feel especially hurt by what they see as America's abandonment, because they saw the U.S. as a special friend. As my landlord told me, "We always thought we had a safety valve to rely on and now we don't know where to turn." The results of that frustration are seen in the withdrawal from NATO, the continuing threat to the American bases here and the toying with the Soviet Union's peace proposal for Cyprus. And all of Kissinger's attempts to placate Greece—disparagingly called love notes in the local press—have been met with Karamanlis' hearing aid turned off. But Karamanlis did hear the night he returned to Athens—the crowd was shouting "democratia," "Elftheria," "exo i Amerikani" or "democracy," "freedom," "Americans go home." He might be joining in the chants. COKIE ROBERTS

(Cokie Roberts is an American newspaper and radio journalist presently living in Athens.)

WASHINGTON REPORT

POST-WATERGATE RECONSTRUCTION—I

The political flood-waters have receded. The sour smell has blown away. The mean-minded men of the White House are now common citizens, although a few may become common criminals before too long. The world of Washington feels itself re-established in its familiar pathways. The temper of the new governors speaks of letting bygones be bygones.

A Rockeford Administration would have us believe we are entering an era of good-feeling. True, the immediate nightmare is over. However, one may legitimately suggest that political euphoria is no substitute for undertaking institutional repairs. That's hard, dirty work to be done in the engine-room. Otherwise, bygones may become fore-gones; what is past may become prologue. The work of reconstruction involves the executive and legislative branches of the federal government—and the press itself, the contented cows of the status quo.

There's bedrock to build on—the principle of accountability of a President has prevailed, somewhat by inadvertence and, even then, not to the extent that Clare Boothe Luce recently assured her *National Review* readers.

President Ford has made an effort to suture a few political and societal wounds, inflicted by the Nixon regime. He traveled the mile along Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol on short notice in order to chat briefly and separately with the Senate and the House of Representatives. The President told each that politically the Avenue is a two-way street, instead of the embargoed thoroughfare it had been during the Nixon Presidency. He called in the Congressional "black caucus" for discussion. He appeared before the VFW, a major professional veterans outfit, to raise the possibility of offering "earned" amnesty on an individual basis to draft-dodgers of the Vietnam war (but not to deserters). The President may have made this offer with a view to extending the blanket amnesty to Nixon, the recluse of San Clemente who down the road could have appeared in courtrooms as the defendant in the dock. There may have been unspoken "linkage" in the President's amnesty remarks.

And, significantly, President Ford nominated Nelson Rockefeller as Vice President. Rockefeller, although a political chameleon, appears to have as much solid support among Congressional Democrats as among Republicans. Criticism directed against him, that is reaching Congressional offices, is generated (1) by his role as Governor in the Attica prison uprising; (2) his views on abortion; and (3) his "liberalism." Actually, Rockefeller has been a closet conservative during most

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of his public life; in recent years, he has moved out of the closet and into the light.

Such preliminary actions of the new President may translate into a good political marriage with the Congress, instead of a honeymoon. Either such relationship, despite mutually good intentions, may flounder on the shoals of a shaky economy and/or a recurrence of last winter's energy "crisis," induced by the oil companies—with which the Rockefellers, Nelson, David & Co.—are not unfamiliar.

Ford's ability to agree without being disagreeable is a welcome climatic change. But this "super-talk" won't suffice in trying to make the present work, much less the future. Institutional changes are called for, but there appears no compelling drive by those in command to effect them. Instead, there is almost a childish delight among a majority of the Congress that it has been rescued from having to pronounce a political death-sentence upon Nixon. Senators, particularly Republicans, were panicky over the prospect of serving as "jurors" in an impeachment trial. Nixon spared them by quitting.

A sense of relief is understandable. But, because the fire's quenched, that doesn't mean the house is fit to inhabit. The House Judiciary Committee did perform ably. Small men and women, who compose this undistinguished Committee, rose large to the occasion. The plebeian House, falsely consigned to oblivion by the Knownothings of political science and by the patricians of the Washington press corps, demonstrated it contained men and women capable of courage and attainment, equal or superior to those sitting in the Senate. Their actions now enable the Congress to reassert its role in the federal government.

This and the acts of open-handedness on the part of President Ford are encouraging and esteemed developments. We may hope that the new President strives not to be one of Arthur Schlesinger's "heroic" Chief Executives, but rather that his Presidency is marked by the competent toil of an accessible, fair-dealing plain-speaking President willing to share his burdens—and glory—with the Congress, of which he was a part for many years, and with the American people. No more unConstitutional purse-snatching from the Congress . . . no more nasty illicit little wars . . . no more monarchial trappings . . . and no more promises to do more, but rather promises to do less. President Ford can do no better, in institutional terms than to render unto Congress the things that are the Congress'. And, if he is not willing, then the Congress should show the determination to force such a pruning of the Presidency.

Within the last 11 years, three Presidents, serving consecutively, have been propelled from office prematurely—one by assassination, the second by enforced retirement and the third by resignation last month. This is an extraordinary condition that may teach us to expect less from Presidents and more from ourselves and from our local and state governments, which themselves need to be reformed.

In so doing, we should avoid two mistakes of traditional reform movements. First, traditional reformers felt themselves and their movements as being "above politics," when, in fact, it is through politics that differences are resolved. Second, a reformed unit of government does not remain reformed if civic watchmen do not man its corridors of power.

In this respect, John Gardner, who founded Common Cause, correctly informs us that to minimize the seductive effects of power, realistic arrangements must be established to make it more difficult for officials to "separate the citizens from the levers of power, and much more difficult for a tightly knit inner circle to monopolize those levers." Mr. Gardner suggests "highly organized, tough-minded citizen action to hold government accountable, a means of voting between elections."

One lesson of Watergate, therefore, is not only that there was a corrupt sitting President but also that there was no one watching. Hopefully, we now understand that we cannot have effective government which depends on a benign (or a malign) executive. At the federal level, this means setting in motion an effective, responsible legislature—the Congress—to juxtapose against an equally healthy executive—the Presidency. A subsequent article will suggest ways-and-means. "Good" men and women in themselves are insufficient. And parenthetically, President Ford is not ridding himself quickly enough of Nixon trash-men in the White House.

"The point is that the time has now come for us to save our native land; the point is that by now our country is perishing not because of any invasion by nations speaking 20 alien tongues, but because of our own selves; the point is that, outside of a legitimate government, another government has formed itself, far more powerful than any legitimate one. It has established a code of its own; a scale of prices covering every form of civic corruption has been set up and these prices have actually been made a matter of common knowledge, and no administrator, even if he were wiser than all the lawgivers and administrators who have ever lived, is strong enough to rectify this evil, no matter how he may curb the actions of the corrupt officials by appointing other officials to watch over them. Nothing will succeed until each one of you comes to feel that he must rise against wrong, even as every man armed himself during the epoch when all the nations rose up (against a common enemy). . . ."

So wrote Gogol in *Dead Souls* more than a century ago.

Today, in our times, we may choose to undertake a cleansing enterprise which also would narrow the gap between promise and fulfillment in American lives. We may fashion an America in which no one is above the law—or below the salt. SISYPHUS

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OTHER BOSTONIANS, PROPERLY CONSIDERED

MICHAEL NOVAK

I looked forward eagerly to Stephan Thernstrom's new book, *The Other Bostonians* (Harvard University Press, 1973, $12). It disappointed me, not in what it revealed, but in the underlying values behind the questions raised.

A contrast must be drawn between Thernstrom's rhetoric and bias, which are leftish, and his performance, which is conservative and Republican. The issues he chooses to study are Horatio Alger issues—poverty and progress—and his understanding is remarkably supportive of Anglo-American Main Street, U.S.A.

The project Thernstrom here undertook, with the help of no less than seven research grants, is commendable. We know, he says, "far more about 'the proper Bostonians' than about the common Bostonians." By studying the musty municipal records of 7,965 randomly selected but representative "common" males over nine decades (from 1880-1970) he means to balance the record at least by a little. His work is commendable, secondly, because his use of quantitative methods and computer technologies clarifies some of the parameters of any further study. *How many* took *which* recorded actions *when* and *in what patterns?* There are some things quantitative study does well, and Thernstrom's book exemplifies them; above all, such work clears the ground and then raises further—and more interesting—questions.

In 1880, Boston counted a third of a million inhabitants and another third of a million in the metropolitan area. By 1970, the urban population had doubled and the metropolitan population had grown by a factor of eight, to almost two and three-quarter million. Thernstrom is able to show that individuals moved with great fluidity into and out of the city, even while net movements of groups over a given period seemed remarkably stable. Between 1955 and 1960, for example, 233,522 individuals left the Boston metropolitan area, while 177,158 outsiders took their places. The net loss of 56,364 understates this vast individual fluidity. Moreover, persons in several social classes, but especially the upper and middle classes, now share this fluidity. Thus "openings" at higher class levels are fluidly available both for in-migrants and for settled citizens.

In Chapters 3 and 4, on "occupational career patterns" and "social class origins and occupational achievement," Thernstrom especially sounds like Horatio Alger. He writes of white-collar employees "skidding into working-class jobs" and of "aggrieved declassé" individuals. We hear of climbs from "rags to riches" (few), from "rags to respectability" (many), and of falls from "respectability back to rags" (many fewer). We hear of the "relatively impermeable barrier" maintained by white-collar families with at least $5,000 in property, which very few other Bostonians penetrated. Below that barrier, we learn, social "fluidity" has been marked: most step up a notch or two. Thernstrom concentrates on economic indices, not on indices of civility, order, community, social compassion or other humane qualities.

And, indeed, when in chapters 6, 7 and 8 he turns to "Yankees and Immigrants," "Protestants, Catholics and Jews," and "Blacks and Whites," his earlier viewpoint is even more conspicuous. The Swedes, he notes, succeed like the Yankees. His viewpoint is affluent, white and Protestant throughout.

Thernstrom's chief contribution concerns ethnic variation, and his chief findings are not surprising. British-American citizens have regularly been more economically successful than the Italians and the Irish, and neither language differential nor rural upbringing seems to account for the difference. Jews did as well as, or in some ways better than, British-Americans. "Catholics," he writes, "were somewhat less dedicated to educational and occupational achievements for their sons than Protestants from the same class and educational backgrounds." The tone and implicit inference in these chapters suggest that Catholics have been somehow, in those things that really count, less admirable, less culturally advanced.

Yet Thernstrom ends his book, suddenly, with a solitary but remarkably Catholic sentiment. He urges "a reexamination of the opportunity ethic itself, a questioning of the fundamental principle." He hopes that out of this questioning "might emerge a richer and more humane conception of the just society" (pp. 260-1). One expects Thernstrom to recall here that some such questioning lay behind the preaching in the Catholic parish against the Protestant ethic of success and the teaching in the parochial schools of values not marketable in mainstream America. Catholic life in this country was for a long time one of the most comprehensive and successful "resistance" movements against the "American way of life." It deserves study in that light, on its own terms, not solely on the terms of the dominant society.

Both Jews and Catholics brought with them, Thernstrom writes, "distinctive habits and attitudes that were slow to disappear and that influenced the occupational trajectories of the two groups long into the future" (p. 175). But when Thernstrom attempts to articulate what these habits and attitudes were (pp. 160ff), his views are remarkably external and imperceptive. His own view of reality is

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DEATH'S PEDAGOGY

PAUL RAMSEY

The assault on the last taboo

As a teacher, death is a stern disciplinarian. She manifests more than a little "over-againstness" in relation to her pupils. Because of this, we who know we are mortal have the opportunity to learn "so to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Many a contemporary view of life and death encourages us to avoid that tutelage. "Pre-death morticians" are telling us how to "manage death" so as to avoid facing that threatening, bracing Other. We had rather die in rational control of our dying, we contemplate insuring that we do so rather than risk the instruction in facing death as an alien power. Such is the outlook, I believe, of Marya Mannes' recent book, *Last Rights* (William Morrow, $5.95).

The word "rights" in the title says it all. In the moment and mood of insisting on rights, one is hardly forming oneself in the wisdom of acknowledged limitations. Mannes can write that "the name of the oratorio is euthanasia"—thus banishing with a phrase all engagement in what John Donne called "Death's Duell." And her statement that "dying is merely suspension within a mystery" seems calculated to induce vertigo in face of a fascinating abyss in prospect. Mannes is playing truant.

Moreover, there is a philosophy of human life entailed in that view of death. There may be some truth in saying that "those who give us the most profound insights into death are those who have most fully lived the life of the spirit: the creators among us." Even so, her illustrations are mainly drawn from those whose passion for a full life turns suddenly into an embrace of death. That's a fair proof that neither true life nor real dying has been the instructor.

In the full scope of her book, veneration for the free spirits and the creators among us turns into an elitist practical philosophy of the insightful or rational *versus* the dumb, the brave *versus* (understandably, of course) the cowards. "We continue to call suicide 'irrational,'" Mannes writes, "on the extraordinary assumption that the millions of people in this world who continue to live miserable lives are 'rational.'" A rather condescending and contemptible attitude, I should say, toward the miserable among earth's persevering inhabitants. This is qualified, of course, by the author's recognition that they may have in some ways the better part, and we the worse. Such people often take death in stride with ritual and chant; perhaps "the privacy so dear to the civilized and economically secure has, in banishing communal ritual and common experience, made acceptance of death intolerable."

Among us, however, the brightest and the best in increasing numbers are choosing a still higher way; and here we come to the crux of the book. Contemplating this nation full of half-lives in wards and nursing homes, sustained by tenacity, Mannes takes up a very definite attitude toward that tenacity (not toward the misery as such) as morally second-rate. "The inference here might be," she writes when first insinuating the point, "that those who opt for life on any terms have never known life in its fullest terms." She then observes, seemingly, descriptively, "Millions have never lived to

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their fullest capacities. And because of this, they would settle rather for a minimal life than no life at all. Their dread of death supersedes all else." Then on the next page she fully endorses the moral judgment underlying those statements: "I believe that the will to die is the direct reflection of the quality of life." "If we have lived to the fullest of our capacities, dying is merely suspension within a mystery. If our lives have seemed wasted or futile, death is more reprieve than reprimand," the author writes just before introducing her own "Living Will" with its specification of many conditions under which she would choose death.

Therefore the reader should reevaluate earlier vignettes that were part of Mannes' accumulation of indignities. For example, her report with obvious distaste of the hospital attendant who cheerily described a patient who "said just yesterday, 'I want to die,' and then right away, 'Can I have two eggs?' "; or the author's report (her rightful distaste this time made explicit in parentheses) of a nursing home supervisor who "said tartly, 'Y' know, they keep on living, they just cling on . . .' (as if this were a nuisance, like incontinence)."

Of course, such tenacity is not a mere nuisance to Marya Mannes. Still, despite the growing euthanasia movement (confusedly, that means active or passive, and even the use of pain-relieving drugs!), she believes that a solution must be devised for those who cannot escape the cake of custom or church. The "independent spirit" is rare; most of us "fear single action"; it is easier to do what others do; think what others think." So in a penultimate chapter the author speaks of "alternative"; these "avenues must be kept open for those who cannot, or will not, bring themselves to join" the euthanasia movement.

Alternatives

Astonishingly, examples of the alternative devised for the groundlings are Youville, a Roman Catholic Hospital in Cambridge, Mass. [". . . You should do more to help him be a part of life as long as he is with us"]; Calvary Hospital in New York, founded over 70 years ago by a group of Catholic women [". . . The sense of peace and light and—very palpably—love, is pervasive"; "There was no smell of death in this place where it claimed many, so soon. Only compassion, and recognition long withheld']; St. Christopher's Hospice in London created and run by Cicely Saunders; and the Hospice to be built in New Haven under the leadership of Florence Wald. These alternatives are movingly described by Marya Mannes. They are among the most graced and graceful institutionalizations of care for the dying that exist in the modern Western world. Yet, if I have not entirely misread this book, they are second-best. The brightest, the best and truly brave will take the high road to rationalized or administered dying.

By way of contrast, Stewart Alsop, in the written record he left behind, had not yet wrestled from death more than a glimpse of its friendly face; nor for him did the human problematic in facing death vary "accordingly as the candidate/ preliminary was" (Emily Dickinson). *Ecclesiastes'* talk about the "times" gain entrance as only a reference in the last lines of Alsop's remarkable account of his own *Stay of Execution* (J. P. Lippincott, $8.95). "There is a time to live, but there is a time to die," the book concludes. "That time has not yet come for me. But it will. It will come for us all." That time came for Stewart Alsop on May 26, 1974. *Stay of Execution* is a remarkable personal document, a rich heritage of wisdom for his family and friends and for the rest of us who read it with some sensitivity to death's tuition for the still living.

The "fact" that death comes to everyone in time obviously was no replacement for and was little assistance in Alsop's own task of dying.

All along, of course, there is a remarkable "distancing" from death not only to keep it at bay but to entice its friendly features. Alsop converses, as it were, with "the man in the white nightgown" (W.C. Fields), with "Uncle Thanatos," once with "dear old Uncle Thanatos." Two lessons he has learned: "that most people are nicer than they seem to be" and "that, although it can be hard at first, in time one becomes accustomed to living with Uncle Thanatos"—the "strange unconscious, indescribable process . . . of adjustment whereby one comes to terms with death." The abundant life he had lived made little difference in that engagement. There was not the slightest tendency to suppose that lesser clods cling to life because they are lesser. Alsop gained both in solidarity with humankind and in appreciation for the uniqueness of his own and others' individual existence.

There was also a musical metaphor that seemed appropriate to Alsop's experience—but it was not, as for Mannes, the "oratorio of euthanasia." A musical analogy comes in when Alsop, mixing metaphors, speaks of the "little pea of fear at the back of my mind," the fear of death. "It was always present, like a kind of background music. Sometimes it receded almost to inaudibility, and then sometimes it would come blaring back, accompanied by a sense of incredibility, 'My God, I really do have cancer, and I really am going to die.' " While his first reaction was to pounce upon a single ominous phrase in his doctor's report of the results of a test, he found he could turn the music down. "The background music, the music of death, blared high again for a moment. But I put John's remark out of my mind—an essential art for one in fear of death—and the background music became almost inaudible again." Again while reading, there was "a sort of con-

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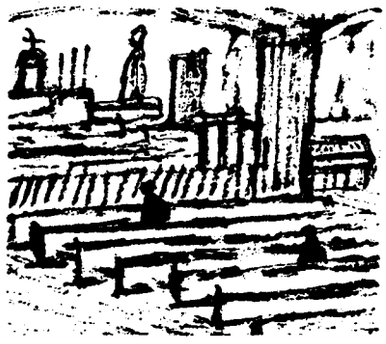
tinual background music—or rather background cacophony—not exactly a headache but a kind of murmuring unpleasantness. . . . The page would blur, and the cacophony in my head would mount from a murmur to a shout."

Having begun a "journal" early in his illness, Alsop later observes that in many disguises "the fear leaps out, every fourth page or so, from my notebooks." Bad test-results he dreaded only "second most"; "what I dread most is getting very sick and dying." He came even to believe that he could tell his own symptoms for a really low count of platelets (which physicians say is impossible for a patient to feel) because then "I do not feel at all well in my skin. There is a constant sense of uneasiness."

There was nothing whatsoever about death that in itself was good or could have been timely; not his very own dying. A person's particular death had to be "learned" (as the uneducated sometimes ungrammatically say for "taught") to be good for him. And in the same instructive dialogue Alsop had also to be "learned" the irreplaceable uniqueness and importance of Stewart Alsop's life-span in the vast sea of humanity. Only the grim Reaper "learns us" that. That, I suppose, is one thing past theologians and philosophers (e.g. Bernard Bosanquet) alike have meant by saying that life is a "vale of soul making."



Alsop, of course, was a lucky man; he had the consolations of philosophy and quotations remembered in untranquility as he probed to find behind the masks of death its true *persona,* or its nature manifest (showing forth) in more than one *personae*. But these were not cheerful poems like the one Mannes quotes from Walt Whitman:

> Dark Mother always gliding near with soft feet,
> Have none chanted for thee a chant of
> fullest welcome?
> Then I chant it for thee; I glorify thee above all:
> I bring thee a song, that when thou must
> indeed come,
> Come unfalteringly.

Rather more to the point for Alsop were T.S. Eliot's lines:

> I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker.
> I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat
> and snicker,
> And in short, I was afraid.

Also he writes, "I was never 'half in love with easeful death,' and I suspect John Keats wasn't either." Consolation and commonality in the human condition were, I judge, conveyed by remembering the words, "On pain of death, name not death to me. It is a word infinitely terrible" (from John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi,* Alsop thought); and in recalling words from a children's game, "Heavy, heavy [hangs over your head], what hangs over?"—and even in the "horrid little poem": "The worms crawl in and the worms crawl out / They crawl all over your face and snout / They make a helluva mess of you." There was nothing maudlin or excessively self-pitying in such thoughts, it seems to me, but rather instruction in the truth *pro nobis.*

Following tests, "bad counts were bad news—much worse news than the gloomiest headlines in the newspapers." So much for the consolations of "social immortality" or Jay Lifton's "surrogates for immortality" needed in the modern age, and for what Robert Morison thinks the continuation of Cornell is going to do for him. What matters to a dying patient is simply "how far he is away from death." So Alsop himself distanced from it as much as he could. He called himself and was called "Dr. Alsop." To a perception of the "odd sense of unreality: that it was *my* death we were discussing," he adds an additional layer of consciousness: "This is a most interesting experience," he twice observes, "although one wishes one were not so personally involved." Even the one "personally" involved is the impersonal pronoun "one" and not quite yet "I myself." He was aware of the need for "papering over misery," that "a man can't be afraid all the time" and can only talk about it when it is over.

The constant tribute to his wife Tish is not for articulated understanding but for silence mutually shared and for "the squeeze of a warm hand in time of darkness and fear." *"Dreadful* is the mysterious power of fate" (italics added), Alsop twice comments, once when reviewing the notebook record of his recent experience, and again when remembering what might have been or not been if in Great Britain during World War I a comrade in the King's Royal Rifle Corps called "Plowboy" had not been ordered to guard duty and Alsop gone instead to a party where he first met Tish: "my six children would not exist," he writes. Not that six other children might exist instead. The singularity of the reference to those non-interchangeable human beings is worth pondering, and applying as well to the life-span here ending by the dreadful verdict of death. The grim Instructor was "learning" Stewart Alsop a thing or two.

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Death is nothing but dreadful to any human being; it is not a fact of life negotiable or manageable like other facts. Quite naturally, then, Alsop thinks of experiences of combat in war, "the first sudden shock of realizing that the people on the other side are really trying to kill you"—after which "an unhappy inner stolidity takes over." That is all that is meant by an understanding of death as always an Enemy, that there are "people" on the other side who are trying to kill you and that in the case of death in the end "they" are going to succeed. So Alsop thinks of his children: while glad that none of his boys has been in war, he wonders whether they may not have missed something all the same. They may have missed finding out more about themselves; it might have been useful for them to face the chance of death when they were young; that "helps to prepare you to face death when you are old." In any case, Alsop "did not realize, until I got sick, how much the war had meant to me."

Combat Imagery

Applying the combat-imagery to his own case he composed in Churchillian periods the following expression of his personal stance toward the Enemy: "We will fight amongst the platelets. We will fight in the bone marrow. We will fight in the peripheral blood. We will never surrender."

Having written *that* in a letter to a friend, Alsop began to cry for "the first time in about fifty years," and in order to get away from his hospital roommate he went into the bathroom and "cried my heart out" and felt a good deal better. There are little ritual "prayers" which he repeats: "Thank you God, thank you Mother, thank you Father, thank you Aggie" or "Please God, please Mother [who is thought maybe to be in the vicinity of God the Father interceding for him as she once did with Franklin Delano Roosevelt!], please Father, Please Aggie"—the latter petition because "one wants to put a chip on the double zero, just in case." That, too, explains the "inexplicable" ease with which he decided to go to NIH from the Georgetown University Hospital: "A man who knows his life is in danger . . . instinctively tries to better the odds."

To understand death to be always an alien power does not mean that it is sensed to crouch and lurk behind every door; it is rather a constant theme or background music: the background of all backgrounds. Combat is aroused only by the blasts or the cacophony. Most of the time, like Alsop in an acute sense, one is "waiting for the disease to declare itself"—the disease life was born with.

Of course, from time to time in the experience of encountering the prospect of his own dying, Alsop thought of resort to the "bare bodkin," while chatting intermittently with his wife Tish "about things that didn't interest us." Literary man that he was, he wonders "who would fardels bare, to grunt and sweat under a weary life?" He refers to Sir William Osler's suggestion that it might be a good idea to chloroform everybody on his sixtieth birthday; and observes, "In fact, chloroform might be appropriate as soon as a person has to wear reading glasses; that is where the downhill trail really starts." He thinks of the convenience of an overdose of sleeping pills. Concerning the latter alternative to chemotherapy and the laminar flow room (where the air comes in one way and goes out the other, and most of the patients do likewise), he writes, "I think I'd choose the pills"; but then wonders whether so: ". . . When you're near death you grasp for life." Perhaps one would not then really want to be so "rational"—or in *that* way rational. "Perhaps I'd simply refuse to take chemotherapy and let nature, in the shape of infection, take its course."

Finally Alsop expressed another set of dependent variables—different from those of Marya Mannes, who, as we have seen, seems to believe that the fuller the life, the higher the "quality" of life that is experienced, then the more acceptance and the less fear of death there will be. Alsop's dependent variables have nothing to do with richness of life or with a "timeliness" ascribed to the approaching death. His is a simple, and more universalizable, functional relation: ". . . When sick the thought of death was more easeful, and far less terrible than it had been. Afterward, when I felt well again and believed I was cured, the thought became very terrible." If true, that means that acceptance of one's own death remains in the end a judgment of comparative indignities still.

The foregoing functional variables—felt sickness, with the thought of easeful death—are associated with another set of variables. Hunting and fishing were joyful activities to Stewart Alsop, sports without which he believed his children are missing something. Yet he writes that "when I was really sick—when I was in close fear of Thanatos—I had no desire at all to kill anything." " 'Neither will I again smite any more every thing living,' God told Noah, and the phrase kept coming back to me." That formed feeling is quite enough to provide a foundation for the views of some theologians that the whole creation groans and is in travail, and must needs be included in the final Redemption—if there is one. Alternatively and with something of a comic spirit, one can try to imagine one of our pre-death morticians, in Stewart Alsop's dying presence, lecturing the fishes and the birds on the "naturalness" of dying.

We should not be surprised, therefore, to find no impulse in Alsop toward an elite of courageous free spirits in contrast to other miserables on earth in regard to dying, such as we saw in Mannes. Concerning an ordinary housewife and mother, back in NIH after a relapse, he discerned that she truly had lived a "normal" life in

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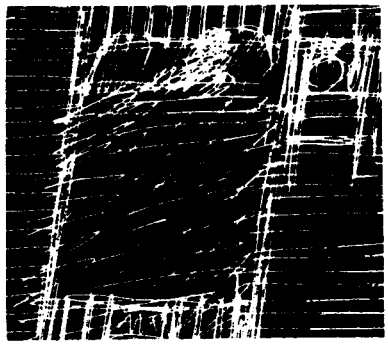
the interim between treatments and "seemed quite unbothered by the sword of Damocles she must have known was hanging over her," not because she was dumb or because death is no evil but because—as in war—"the bravest men were rarely intellectuals or sensitive souls." The woman had learned to live with the background music, subdued or cacophonous, and that requires (death was "learning" Alsop to know his platelets) first of all a recognition that the theme of death throughout lived or dying life is no simple tune to dance to. It is always too untimely for that.

"Would it really be worthwhile to spend a month or more cooped up all alone in a laminar flow room, losing my hair and my flesh, either to die in the room or to emerge a bald skeleton and wait for death?" To ask that question and suchlike questions is to ask about comparative medical indignities or comparatively painful or insulting or embarrassing states of human affairs that are, at least, commensurate with one another. Such problems are intrinsicallly solvable—even if no one



knows the answers and there are none given in the back of the book. Even if not quantifiable along a scale, the comparands (if there is such a word) are on the same plane. A logically appropriate class name for *all possible answers* to suchlike questions might be "euthanasia" —although that term is ordinarily used in a sense restricted to only some possible answers, narrowing down to such things as Hamlet's "bare bodkin." (*That* Alsop thought of when he asked himself that question.) But whether the term encompasses all possible answers to such questions, or only some, "euthanasia" is the name for judgments concerning comparative indignities; it is the name for choices made only because there is worse still in the alternative.

A "better death" would be better to say than a "good death." "Euthanasia" is a term as appropriate for all possible answers as it is for some or any answers to questions of the sort. Would it be better to die this way or that? today or tomorrow?—with the medical details and manner of dying filled in. Yet the term is really appropriate to *none* of the possible answers. A "better dying," however, is very often a fitting expression. Alas! To the misleading or falsifying term "euthanasia," the expression "death with dignity" adds only cosmetics and an expansive and dubiously persuasive rhetoric. It should be wholly jettisoned from all our talk about death and dying.

From that question Alsop went deeper to ask himself another; not however in the interrogative mood. Rather did the "disease" of dying "declare" itself. It questioned Stewart Alsop; within his conversation with himself, I should say, he felt himself addressed. ". . . Then a sense of the reality of death crowded in on me—the end of a pleasant life, never to see Tish again or Andrew or Nicky or the four other children again, never to go to Needwood again, or laugh with friends, or see the spring again. There came upon me a terrible sense of aloneness, of vulnerability, of nakedness, of helplessness. I got up, and fumbled in my shaving kit, and found another sleeping pill and at last dozed off."

The same experience is recounted on a day among many days he walked with Tish toward the NIH building to be "marrowed." They observed "a well-tended little triangle of roses"; and Alsop wondered why they don't have Japanese beetles against which nothing works at Needwood. Suddenly silence, "and then I knew I wouldn't see the roses next year. . . . I reached out my hand for Tish's. 'I have just run out of my small store of courage,' I said. She squeezed my hand and said nothing."

If he did not know it before or sense it deeply along his bone marrow, death was saying to Stewart Alsop "I'll learn-ye" the meaning of being the transient center of a whole world of worth, his one and only world of worth. Not Tish or the children or their home in the country or the roses or the generations of an old and honored Connecticut Yankee family until now close to centers of political power or the world-historical significance of doing columns for *Newsweek* or getting briefings from Kissinger; not these not yet but *he* was passing away. If Alsop's world of concrete values seems to anyone too narrow, let him expand it however much he will, let him also add realized "qualities of life" however much richer, then let him give all that a history however long, and the result is the same.

The death of him who is the center of all that world of worth—and, not to be sentimental, let us add the cessation of the center of all the evil as well as the good that may comprise an experienced life—cannot fail to be for him an irreparable loss, on unquenchable grief, the threat of all threats, a dread that is more than all fears aggregated together, an approaching "evil" which annuls every ordinary distinction between good and evil, the background of every background that has foregrounds, a murmuring music rising to a cacophony and then receding which, not written in the score, we hear behind all themes of life whether well or poorly sung. If he knew it not from some philosophy of life and death more profound than that which unfolds the banner of "death with dignity," Stewart Alsop was being "learned" by

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the final "indignity of death" (if anything, that is too mild an expression) to know the meaning of treading water over a thousand fathoms (or, is it twenty thousand?), of his life's course as a trajectory, and the unrepeatable, non-interchangeable significance of an individual life-span. The most faithful stern teacher of that lesson—and there are others—exacts a high tuition, the highest tuition exacted over all the earth. The more "life" (unique, individual human life) becomes a pro-word, the more death is an enemy; the more death is an anti-word, the more pro we should be and will be in respect for any of our companions in this dying life of ours.

Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is often read as an attack upon the triviality and superficiality with which death is treated by the people round about a dying man, and as a complaint over the awful isolation of the dying under those circumstances. Or as a testimony to the goodness or acceptability of a natural death apart from such "socialization." These things are true, of course. But one has first of all to bring into view the awfulness and awe-fullness of death itself in order to grasp Tolstoy's understanding of the very meaning of that demeaning superficiality painted over the face of death in civilization today. *Ivan Ilych* must not have been on the reading list at Groton; Alsop never refers to that work. Still I venture to say that Alsop was schooled to many of the same insights.

"Beneath the isolation and superficiality he felt suppressed in [Tolstoy writes] because those who came to see him did not wish 'to admit what they all knew and what he knew' was *a sense of the awfulness and uniqueness of dying*: 'Those lies—*lies enacted over him* on the eve of his death and destined *to degrade this awful, solemn act* to the level of their visitations, their curtains, their sturgeon for dinner—were a terrible agony to Ivan Ilych. . . . The *awful, terrible act of dying* was, he could see, *reduced* by those about him *to the level of a casual, unpleasant, and almost indecorous incident* (as if someone entered a drawing room diffusing an unpleasant odor)" (italics added).

And what was so special about Ivan Ilych's death that prevented his taking toward it—at least as an ideal—the stance of "a rational man," if not the stance of these men, then some others, perhaps the outlook of a compassionate Ideal Observer who views his death as one among others? What so precious was at stake in excepting his death from the visitation of those "lies enacted over him" that had first to remove the taste of it? Ivan Ilych had always been persuaded of the correctness of the logical syllogism, "Caius is a man, man is mortal, therefore Caius is mortal." That was "correct as applied to Caius but certainly not as applied to himself. That Caius—man in the abstract—was mortal was perfectly correct, but he was not Caius, not an abstract man, but a creature quite separate from all others."

Why, separate from all others? And why would he particularly be degraded by any degradation of the awful, unique, terrible, solemn act of dying? Because of who he was that was dying. Not simply *assertedly* no abstraction. But a human being in bodily identity with that dying process. Not simply a self-centered collection of specific memories: "He had been little Vanya, with toys, a coachman and a nurse." That would seem individuation enough—all elements, doubtless, not without sense and touch. But one in particular strikes me as suggestive of the memory saturated with sense—the smell of leather and the feel of roundness and bodily agility in play—that here was dying. "What did Caius," Ivan Ilych asks, "know of the smell of that striped leather ball Vanya had been so fond of?" Someone should pay attention to what here is forever to be no more when Ivan Ilych dies. He was comprised of that. At least *he* must pay attention. None do, who treat him and that ball as an incident, one among the many. Rather like Stewart Alsop's roses at NIH; or better still his country home to him, and Tish and his children.

In any case, the humanity of mankind is at stake in how, after sex, we go about assaulting this last taboo: death. It is not simply that we hoped to improve matters in the first instance by chatting about sex all day long for the last three decades, and now propose to do the same about death. That policy was foredoomed to failure, and foreseeably so without a sound understanding of *the human* that can be either enhanced or violated by at least some opinions or actions in the realm of sexuality. Still largely without that normative guide to action and for social approval, we now have "calisthenic sexuality," and 12-hours of consecutive pornographic movies for the purpose to utterly "desensitize" patients in a poor people's Masters and Johnson "therapeutic" program at certain medical schools, thereafter to begin their reconstruction as desiring bodily beings.

The same outlook and program addressed to "the last taboo" can only lead eventually and logically to the same thing: to "calisthenic dying," i.e. deliberate death, administered death; and submission to the power of a widespread chatter that tells us again and again fables about "death with dignity," good deaths. That, indeed, spells the end of "intensive *care*" for the dying! Such consequences come from first turning mysteries to be contemplated and deepened altogether into problems to be solved. Can human beings be utterly desensitized and then reconstructed in their attitudes toward death—at least operationally toward the deaths of the useless—according to the requirements of instrumental social rationalism? It remains to be seen whether trepidation, awe and respect in the face of encounters with death because of the unique human beings therein made manifest, can withstand dissolution in this civilization any more than sexual relations between human embodied persons withstood reduction to "sturgeon for dinner."

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DR. HECKLE AND MR. CHIDE

THE SCREEN

At one point during *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz,* Duddy's uncle tells him, "You're a *pusherke,* a little Jew boy on the make. Guys like you make me sick and ashamed." But its not quite that simple. This rather blunt estimation of Duddy as the lowest of the low really underestimates the poor fellow, who is somewhere much closer to the middle of the human condition. He is in that middling state which is the lot and affliction of us all. He is, like all mankind, a middle link in the Great Chain stretching from the beasts to the angels.

How true this is can be seen from his relationship with that same uncle who condemns him. The point of the relationship is to show us Duddy's equatorial distance from both the uncle on one pole and his own father on the other. Duddy's uncle is a humane man as well as a successful one. The garment business that has made him rich is no sweat shop, for it was he who organized his own workers' union and extended their benefits. In his Westmont home overlooking Montreal, Duddy's uncle can now afford to pursue the higher things in life. Meanwhile, in the ghetto of the city below, Duddy's father is not only a fast-talking hustler, a man without scruples, but a petty hustler to boot—a *schlumpf,* a failure, a cabbie who spends his time in a luncheonette talking a better game than he plays, and then has to pimp for some cheap trick to make ends meet.

And Duddy's relations with these two men are absolutely evenhanded. In a scene part way through the film, Duddy is rebuffed trying to give his father a present and, in a very uncharacteristic moment, weeps as a result. Then a few reels later he also remonstrates with his uncle for exactly the same thing, not having loved him more. The absolute balance being maintained here, this inescapable tit-for-tat, makes us very aware of the way in which Duddy himself splits the difference between the two men. Using his father's methods, he duplicates his uncle's success.

In effect most of the characters in this film have been put there in pairs, like species into an ark, to reflect the polarities of Duddy's personality. The most purely symbolic of them are a Montreal gangster named Dingleman and a hapless boy named Virgil who works for Duddy. The former is the only character in the film who uses Duddy without ever having to do him a favor in return, the latter is the only one whom Duddy himself uses with equal impunity, and both men are cripples. Dingleman has been a cripple from birth, but Virgil only becomes one as a result of being exploited by Duddy. That's the sort of fellow Duddy is: the victim of one kind of cripple, the creator of another kind, and in spirit, a cripple himself. But is Duddy ultimately somebody more sinned against than sinning? Director Ted Kotcheff and novelist-scriptwriter Mordecai Richler do their best not to think about that one at all. They stick to a devious middle way, balancing out every minus with a plus until Duddy seems at last to add up to a big zero.

Duddy's treatment of Virgil notwithstanding, the people who have made this film share Duddy's own view of his shenanigans. Like him, they are betting that we shall all love him in spite of himself. Duddy is a wheedler in his own behalf, and so are Kotcheff and Richler. That is why, when there is something to be said against him, it is couched in terms of an anti-Semitic remark that vitiates the criticism. The exchange between Duddy and his uncle shows us not the truth about Duddy's character, but the limitations of the uncle's. Richard Dreyfuss plays the irrepressible Duddy as the type of person who gets so excited that his skin actually itches and he finds himself scratching frantically right in the middle of his most important wheelings and dealings. Who can stay mad at someone whose greed is only skin deep—someone whose weaknesses are all so close to the surface and plain to see?

Only in a figurative sense might Duddy be thought of as Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde, but Harry Benson (George Segal) in *The Terminal Man* is literally a reincarnation of that nineteenth-century schizophrenic, a transistorized replay of the classic psychopath whose killer personality alternates with that of a nice guy. Because his personality has gone through this two-for-one split after an automobile accident, Harry decides to submit to an operation that will implant electrodes in his brain. The idea is that this will turn his rages into moments of placid self-gratification, but the idea goes haywire. After the operation Harry so enjoys the aura of violence that he overloads his circuits and blows a fuse.

What short-circuits the film as a whole is that director-scriptwriter Mike Hodges sees everything in it in terms of black and white. He quite literally sees all the sets, costumes and effects of his Technicolor film in these terms. Interiors from the hospital cafeteria to the bedroom of Harry's go-go dancer girlfriend are decorated in black and white color schemes. The only costumes-change for Harry's psychiatrist (Joan Hackett) is from all white hospital garb to a slinky black evening gown. When Harry commits his first post-operative murder, even the blood finds its way onto a black-and-white checkerboard linoleum floor, running in the ridges between the squares like unwanted moisture into the grids of a printed circuit.

It's not only the color schemes, however, that are seen in pure black and white. The characters—and, by

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implication, the moral issues—are too. The surgeons are all men whose only sensitivities are in their hands. The cop guarding Harry reads comic books and does clownish double takes when Harry escapes his custody. And so forth. Since everyone else in the film is as much a wind-up toy as Harry is, it's impossible to choose among them. Every time George Segal's eyes roll back, signaling the onset of another of his attacks, one can't help wondering whether the problem isn't really that he has again passed out from the pain of having to act in this movie.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

BOOKS

. . . THESE THREE: FAITH, HOPE AND DEATH

JAMES FINN

Fragments of a Century
MICHAEL HARRINGTON
Saturday Review Press, $9.95

Fragments of a Century is a disturbing book. As Michael Harrington no doubt intended. It is a book devoted to death and hope. The death of beliefs and visions and dreams and hope in people, a highly uncertain social theory and the future. It is also an instructive and provocative book, in some respects most instructive and provocative where it is most disappointing. Above all this autobiographical account of one man's active participation in some of the great social movements of our time is poignant.

The shape of the book is classic. A young man from the provinces comes to the big city and achieves success, a measure of fame and power, and comes to know the great and near great. But inevitably he is changed. Many of the values, cultural attitudes, opinions and beliefs he brought with him have been transformed or discarded. And much of what he has gained, often at great risk and cost, is not what it seemed to be when, long ago, it glimmered so seductively in the distance. Described from the treacherous vantage point of middle age, the journey of this particular young man takes on more than merely personal interest. He has succeeded in using his life as a prism through which is reflected some of the most significant events of the last couple of decades.

As we finish Harrington's book and the account of his life to date we know —as he does—that never again will the energies be so great, the expectations so high, the over-arching theories so grand, and the certainties so sure. All have been reduced to the measure of these sad, dispiriting times. But not quite. It is here that Harrington is most helpful, most useful. Despite the fact that dreams of the '60s have soured; that comrades of troubled times have defected to conservatism; that the Left has, once again, splintered its forces and scattered the always meager resources at its disposal; that the political will to tackle real, discernible social problems has dwindled—despite all these truths with which Harrington lives in intimacy, that moral outrage which surged through and gave life to *The Other America* still lives and, for Harrington, provides the bases for future political plans.

Harrington, born into an Irish Catholic middle-class family in a Midwestern town, has been, he writes, "on terms of some familiarity with the religious, political and cultural crises of age." The claim holds for the last two of this trinity, but Harrington on the crisis of religion today is, surprisingly, thin gruel. He misunderstands significant events, and clichés that he would disdain in political discussion are, in his comments on Catholicism, thrown on the counter as if they should ring as the real right thing. They don't; they ring hollow.

In the modern world religion has increasingly withdrawn from areas of life which it once dominated. The "death of God" has been proclaimed with deep seriousness by great figures like Nietzsche, and it has been celebrated in our time by theologians of considerably lesser stature. Harrington recapitulates this familiar story but brings no additional insight. But he does purport to tell us what happened to Catholicism in recent decades and what is likely to happen in the near future. I do not think he is a sound guide on either issue.

Harrington was taught by Jesuits a Catholicism that depended upon a subtle, rationalist theory of interlocking parts. A house of cards theory. It all hung together—or, removing a single card, it all fell apart. For Harrington that card was removed twenty years ago and he has been "out of the Church for more than twenty years." His experience, he thinks, simply anticipated that of many Catholics. Pope John "told his flock to forget the dogmas for a while and listen to their hearts. They did, and discovered that they could no longer hear the voice of God within themselves."

The misconceptions packed in that brief thesis are not easy to discuss both briefly and fairly. The clear implication in Harrington's statement is that prior to Vatican II Catholics *did* hear the voice of God within themselves. What they actually heard, however, was the voice of the "ahistorical orthodoxy" most Catholics, including Harrington, were taught to hear prior to Vatican II. (The precise and accurate phrase is Michael Novak's.) The Council wrought the significant changes it did in our thinking because it was the greatest

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single educational exercise in modern times. And it was so not because of Pope John's invocations, but because it brought together many people who thought they were pursuing their scholarly and theological studies in relative isolation. Brought together in Rome, they suddenly discovered they were engaged in a large-scale collective effort pointed in the same direction. Discovered also that they would be supported by the majority of the bishops gathered there. This sudden discovery burst the bonds of the ahistorical orthodoxy within which Catholicism had for centuries been contained. The changes which Catholics should have been able to cope with gradually, generation by generation, swept over us suddenly, undercut the familiar orthodoxies which had long supported us, and left most of us floundering. We are not, for the most part, attempting to swim back to the ahistorical orthodoxy which we once regarded—and Harrington still does—as Catholicism proper. What intellectual Catholics are attempting to do is to reconstruct amid the various pluralisms of our time a statement that will communicate to themselves and others what the gospel-community is today, and how that community continues to be directed by the Gospel.

After praising two Catholic philosophers who are attempting to do just that, saying they were "at least quite serious in attempting to believe under impossible theological conditions," Harrington passes on to others: "More timorous people responded—I speak now of a tiny, but quite influential, minority, who, if past experience is any guide, are the precursors of the masses—by a shamefaced, hypocritical Catholical atheism." What reader of past experience have we here? The masses are to follow a timorous, shamefaced and hypocritical minority? Not bloody likely!

I do not mean to diminish Harrington's own experience, or to exchange religious graffiti—"God is dead" vs. "God lives." I wish only to point out that Harrington was less a precursor of those who detached themselves from the Church after Vatican II than

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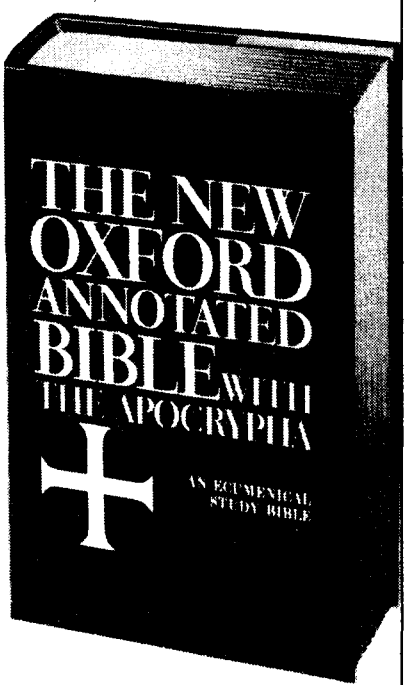

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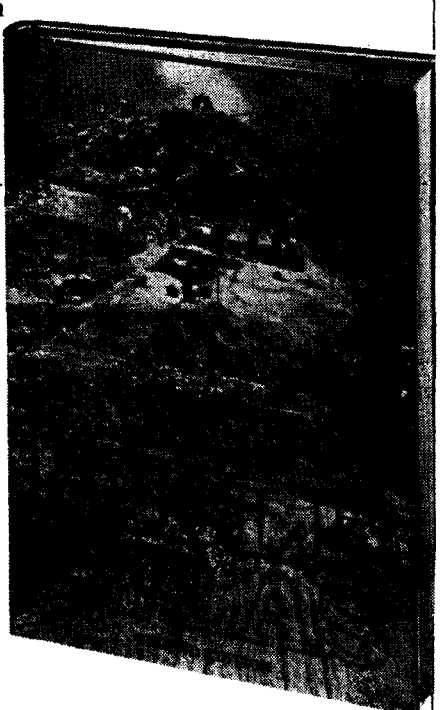

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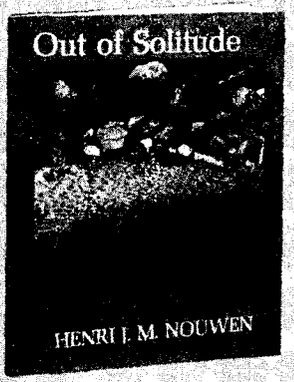

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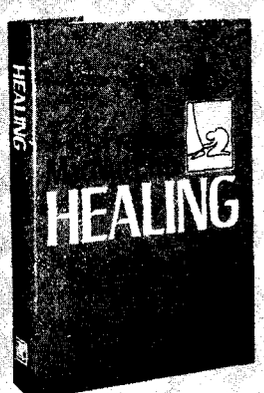

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he is the tail end of a tradition that includes figures such as James T. Farrell and Mary McCarthy—and can tell us as little as they about contemporary Catholicism.

To pass from Harrington's discussion of the death of God to his discussion of the "death of Bohemia" is to pass from what seems to be written dutifully, for the value of being inclusive, to what engages and stimulates Harrington both emotionally and intellectually. As one who passed through many of the scenes Harrington depicts and who lingered here and there I can testify to the accuracy of his observation. After reading this section several times I am finally persuaded—I think completely—that Harrington is right. The death of Bohemia, frequently and prematurely proclaimed, has finally taken place. It occurred in the fifties and sixties. The thesis, starkly stated, is this: "increases in quantity eventually mean a change in quality, . . . a Bohemia that enrolls a good portion of a generation is no longer a Bohemia." Bohemia has been overcome by assimilation. It is Harrington's elaboration of that thesis and his strongly evocative description of the time and place that was Bohemia in those days that is both persuasive and moving. It is not a small argument to make and it tells us much about the messy, disheveled present.

Harringto is best known, probably, and properly so as the most articulate exponent of democratic socialism in America today. His book on *Socialism* develops more fully, more theoretically, what he discusses here in personal terms. It is somewhat disturbing to find that the skeleton sketched out here is at least as inviting as the fleshed-out version. As Harrington describes his initiation into Marxist theory, his participation in the civil rights movement, his break with SDS and his fight with the New Left, his conversion to a "truly radical"—i.e., radical-liberal—stance, and the gathering of "the remnant of the remnant" into the new Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee—and as one follows his frequently lonely, often courageous path through the years of those activities, one can at least entertain the notion that the best of Harringon is not in the theories he advocates but in the man himself.

Each of his real discoveries and political insights was shared, to some degree, by people with non-Marxist views. The same could be said, of course, about his obfuscations and early wrong judgments; for example, the refusal to recognize real differences between Eisenhower and Stevenson, or Kennedy and Nixon and the belittling of the political value of the labor movement. (The same kind of faulty analysis and judgment were taken over by many New Left and "radical" types in 1968, when Harrington had learned to recognize the real political difference between electing Humphrey or Nixon.) As Harrington employs it the real strength of socialist theory is that it provides him with tools of analysis and allows him to expose methodically the frequently crushing inequities of our society. But the perception and imaginative grasp of those inequities come first.

"Still, there was not—there is not—a single power that incarnates the socialist ideal, and it is difficult for a man to dedicate himself to a possibility that will probably not be realized in the century—if indeed, ever." This is Harrington in the course of talking about Max Schachtman, one of his mentors and a dedicated socialist. It could, and at this point I think it does, apply to Harrington.

As I noted earlier, Harrington's book is a story of the loss of faith, of death and of hope. Insofar as that hope is lodged in the socialist ideal that Harrington sketches it must be, indeed, a fragile thing. Harrington brings to the service of that ideal a generosity of spirit, a vision, dedication and a moral energy. As long as there are people like Harrington there is ground for political hope, for he represents that unsatisfied, questing, probing, pushing for what politics should provide. And, not to be irretrievably solemn, I recall that this is not represented as his last word and that further reconsiderations will be in order. After all, Harrington is only half way, mid-way into the dark woods.

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The Political Stage

MALCOLM GOLDSTEIN

Oxford U. Press, $13.95

Stage Left

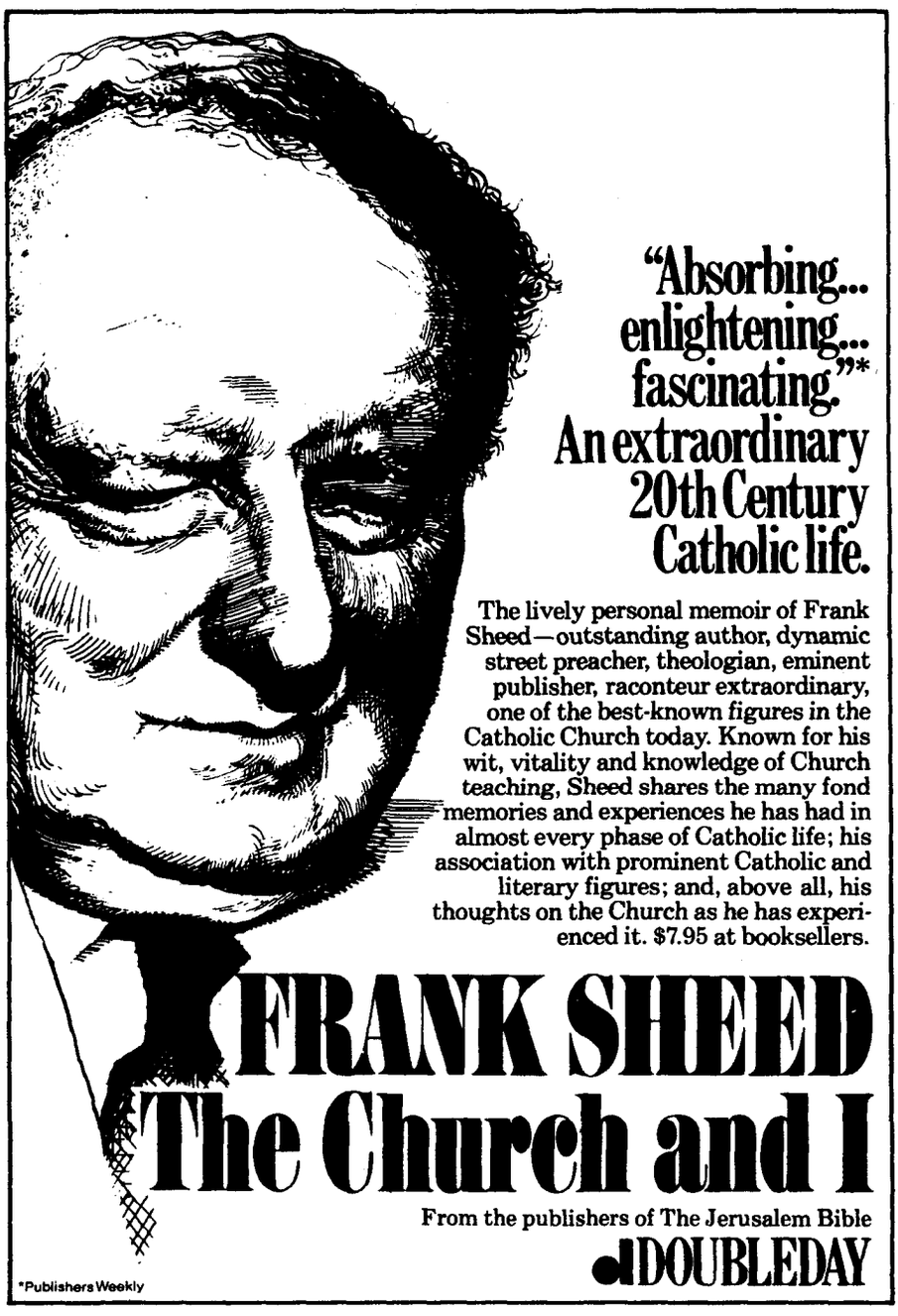
JAY WILLIAMS

Scribners, $8.95

GERALD WEALES

If anyone were to run a content analysis of American drama in the 1960s, he would probably find that, pound for pound, there was a greater percentage of social criticism, political comment and simple propaganda on the American stage during that decade than there was in the 1930s. Still, the 1930s retains its image as the preeminently political decade in the American theater—and rightly so. It was then that the social impulse, an important part of American drama from the beginning (*v.* Mercy Warren's eighteenth-century political farces), became more institutionalized, when theaters—amateur and professional—were built on social and political premises rather than aesthetic ones; when non-theatrical organizations—unions, committees for one cause or another, the Communist Party—began to see the possibility of theater as a tool and a weapon; and when producers, playwrights and performers with no strong political commitment of their own found that, being mirrors as Hamlet said, they could hardly help but reflect the world around them. The political theater is not the whole story of American drama in the 1930s, as Malcolm Goldstein indicates at the beginning of his book, but it is so vivid and vital a part of the whole that it is little wonder that it continues to attract both scholars who want to document the period and participants who want to remember what it was like. The difficulty, as both Goldstein's and Jay Williams' works indicate, is that too often the vividness and the vitality of the subject fail to rub off on the books about the period. Although both of these books have their virtues, it was a sense of duty rather than a feeling of pleasure that kept me reading.

The best thing about *The Political Stage* is the diligence with which Goldstein searched for material. His industry can be seen to advantage in the chapters on the Theater Union and on the variety of productions among the small Leftist groups, for these are the best—the fullest, that is—I have seen. Elsewhere, when he writes about the Group Theater, the Federal Theater and the Mercury, his dependence on works by participants—Harold Clurman, Hallie Flanagan, John Houseman—gives his account a second-hand look, the more noticeable for its presentation of the facts with the passion missing. The problem of organization in a book like this is tremendous and Goldstein never really solves it. Since I have no happy solution up my sleeve, perhaps I should not criticize him on these grounds, but his decision to begin on the Left and to move, chapter by chapter, to the Right, first for 1930-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35, then—in reprise—for 1935-1940, makes it difficult for the reader who must constantly reorient himself in relation to the other material in the book. He makes his middle-of-the-decade division because he senses a change of mood around 1935 (I think the stirrings of optimism began early in Roosevelt's first term) and because that presumed change coincided with the growth of the Popular Front. Like almost everyone who moves retroactively into the period, Goldstein becomes fascinated with the shifts in the Communist line during the 1930s and the effect on Leftist drama, but the fascination leads him occasionally to unnecessary conclusions, as when he sees *Oklahoma!* and *On the Town* as "carry-overs into the new decade of the Popular Front admiration of American vistas and sentimental regard for the ordinary, 'little' man," as though the American past and the little man had not been commonplaces of American drama ever since the nineteenth century. As a gathering of who did what where and when and for how long, *The Political Stage* will continue to be valuable, but its vast accumulation of names finally defeats it as both historical re-creation and theatrical criticism. His description of Elmer Rice's failure in *We, the People* and *Judgment Day* might stand for his own book: "it is the unfortunate result of the panoramic style, in which so many characters take part in the action that none is explored in depth." As the author of several books that cover too many plays in too few pages, I sympathize with Goldstein in the task he set himself, but my sympathy kept getting smothered in detail, much of which was already familiar to me, and opinion which was too often derivative or unsupported.

Jay Williams turns up in Goldstein's book as the co-author of sketches for the New Theater League and Cabaret TAC. Oddly enough, he does not turn up in *Stage Left*, except at the very beginning in which he explains, rather foolishly, that 1930s theater "all seems to be forgotten" and that he will rectify that imaginary oversight. Williams' book covers much the same ground that Goldstein's does, but in a rather casual way ("I am romantic, sentimental, and unreliable"). When the "hungry friends" of tap-dancer Bobby Bruskin turn out to include Peter Lawford and Buddy Hackett, both of whom would have been about ten years old at the time, one begins to suspect that he may have a very uneasy grasp of detail. For the most part, his attempt at factual presentation is simply a run-through of familiar material, including familiar errors (such as that Odets' *Till the Day I Die* was based on a letter in *New Masses*) which have long since been corrected. His thumbnail discussions of Expressionism or labor history are simply embarrassing, making one wonder for whom the book is intended. For the most part a fragile and infuriating book, *Stage Left* is valuable, particularly in the sections on the Workers Laboratory Theater, whenever Williams sets out to recreate what it was like to live and work with a theater group during the period, particularly when he leans for support on reminiscences, such as those of Will Lee. It is difficult for me to understand why he bothered with a pseudo-history of the period when he could have written a personal book—strengthened by the recollections of the people he talked to—and still have made the points he wants to emphasize: that there was as much fun as politics in the movement, that it cannot be understood only in terms of the Communists and their wavering line and that it made contributions that are still easily evident in the theater today. I am grateful to Williams for reproducing what he identifies as the true WLT version of *Newsboy*, for his use of Edna Ocko's marvelous recollection of the proletarian dance and its worker audiences and for his continuing insistence on the youth and the enthusiasm that went into much of the Leftist theater of the 1930s. I will still go to Malcolm Goldstein if I want information.

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THOMAS POWERS

Justin Kaplan's biography of Mark Twain was so good that a reviewer of his new book about Lincoln Steffens finds himself searching for some adequate way to explain why it is . . . not so good. The book has no obvious faults; it is far from being lazily researched or carelessly written, but Steffens never quite comes to life and it is hard to see why Kaplan devoted

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

REVIEWERS

JAMES FINN, formerly an editor of *Commonweal*, is now editor of *Worldview*, a monthly journal devoted to morality and politics.

GERALD WEALES is professor of drama at the University of Pennsylvania.

THOMAS POWERS received the Pulitzer Prize for national reporting in 1971. His most recent book is *The War at Home*.

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eight years to writing a book about him.

Steffens is best known, of course, as one of the crusading journalists at the turn of the century who helped a reluctant public to see what the long post-Civil War industrial boom had done to American life. Huge corporations had "rationalized" the major industries, a nice term which means that small companies in the oil, steel, coal, railroad and other businesses had been bought out or forced to the wall. The result was an unparalleled growth in the wealth and power of the surviving corporations, which, unchecked, were peremptory with their workers and indifferent to the poverty which was a principal product of their astonishing expansion. Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker and the other journalists whom Teddy Roosevelt eventually attacked as "muckrakers" punctured the country's complacent boom psychology and pointed out what should have been obvious, the appalling human cost of commerce in the age of the robber barons.

This was important work and Steffens had a lot to do with it. His best-known book, *The Shame of the Cities*, published in 1904, buoyed him to the top of the wave of reform which ended with World War I, made him famous and left him wondering what to do. In the thirty years which remained of his life Steffens again captured the public's attention in an important way only twice: in 1919, when he returned from a quasi-official trip to revolutionary Russia and made the much-quoted remark that "I have been over into the future, and it works"; and in 1931, at the beginning of another period of reform which ended with a war, when Steffens published his *Autobiography*. After its warm reception he told his wife, "I guess I am a success. I guess I'll go down in history now." He did, as people sometimes do who are popularly identified with events greater than themselves.

Steffens' career was certainly the stuff of history but it is not necessarily the stuff of biography, and that is what seems to be the problem with Kaplan's book. As a young man Steffens was vaguely literary; his interests changed but his vagueness remained. After several years of wandering through the university towns of Europe he drifted into journalism in New York in 1892 and found he had a talent for it. He drifted into muckraking, too, and found he had an even greater talent for that. A lot of other muckrakers drifted out of it again but Steffens, a deeper and more sensitive man, puzzled for the rest of his life over the difficulty inherent in trying to change a flawed social and economic system through piecemeal reform. This is an old problem but Steffens, for all his agonizing, brought nothing to its solution.

Eventually Steffens concluded that his own efforts had been feeble and ineffective, that the machinery of society demanded some sort of change more profound than the tinkering which the muckrakers inspired. The readiest alternative, of course, was socialism, but Steffens, while "sym-

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pathetic" to the revolutionaries of America and Europe, never embraced their answer in any deep or personal way. He made speeches and wrote articles defending the great Russian experiment even after it began to go sour but, unlike his friend John Reed, he could not accept the logical consequences of his own arguments. He advocated one sort of life and lived another.

There was something dreamy and ineffectual about Steffens between the collapse of the muckrakers' reform movement and his death in 1936. He wanted change and agreed, in a theoretical way, that the revolutionaries offered the best hope for change, but his reasons for not joining them were vague and tenuous. He insisted he was too old and too firmly rooted in the capitalist way of life which had treated him so well, that he was too completely a product of the discredited past. Fifty years later it is hard not to see him simply as a likable ditherer. "To great financiers he is a harmless radical," said a newspaperman who knew him in Paris in the 1920s; "to radicals he is a harmless reactionary. Both worlds find him elusive: a spectator but not an actor in the drama of their shock and conflict."

Steffens' shallowness is typical of the lives of journalists. The exigencies of their trade force them to skate on the surface of events, with the result that their personal histories read like the newspapers of the time, skipping from story to story and never lingering to provide more than a sketch of what happened. Like his friend Reed, Steffens wrote about the revolutions in Mexico and Russia but, unlike Reed, he was just passing through. Reed went to Russia and stayed, as a revolutionary rather than a reporter, and his account of the October revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, is a book of enduring literary and historical value. Steffens also sensed the importance of the revolution but his commitment was shallower. He went in April, 1917, took a look around, and was back in Washington by June 26 on a nutty mission to tell President Wilson how he might persuade Russia to remain in the war. His effort was earnest and well-intentioned, but came to nothing. All that remains of his quick dip into Russia between the revolutions is a vivid journalist's account of the Petrograd Soviet—"I was halted, as by a blow, by the stink of the mob inside, and I could see the steam rising, as from a herd of cattle, over those sweating, debating delegates. . . . Watching that mass meeting of delegates was like seeing the historical development of human government out of chaos."

This is first-rate journalism, but it is also the observation of a man who is only a kind of professional witness. Steffens never advanced beyond the periphery of events. What he wrote tells us something, but not much, about what he saw, and his private reactions were too confused and shallow to have more than incidental interest now. At the time, his fame made him seem to be at the center of things but now we can see that in fact he was always on the edge, a decent, feeling, but uncertain man in the audience of history.

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Michael Novak (Cont.)

so pervasive that he does not successfully "pass over" into views not his own. (The recent Carnegie Commission volume on the subject, by contrast, is far more successful.)

In his treatment of the black experience in Boston, Thernstrom becomes immeasurably more sympathetic, detailed and—I fear—sentimental. His main points are well made. He shows that a "pervasive belief in Negro inferiority" fostered overt racial discrimination in many industries until World War II, and that the early experience of blacks was different in *kind* not only in *degree* from that of other immigrants. Against Irving Kristol, Thernstrom shows that blacks in Boston are not a "new" immigration from the rural South, parallel to older rural immigrations of European peasants; many have been in Boston for generations, or were earlier urban in experience. Against Daniel Moynihan, he shows that black family patterns (until recently) approximated white patterns—in 1880, even more Irish families (27 percent) were female-headed. Thernstrom's best point is that suddenly, during World War 11, blacks became *over-represented* as operatives in industry; obviously, not deficiencies in themselves but external discrimination had before then kept them out. (A

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lower threshold of competition is a factor he doesn't examine.)

Those "cultural factors" that have kept blacks from amassing capital, entering business, maintaining artisan traditions, and promoting education in the family also suggest differences in *kind*, not only in *degree*, between white ethnic and black cultures. Yet whatever the differences they faced in the past, from here on, Thernstrom writes, "American Negroes may face opportunities and constraints that are fairly analogous to those experienced by millions of European migrants who struggled to survive in the American city of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." Passive or structural discrimination and the distinctive strengths and weaknesses of their own culture affect the destiny of blacks, just as they still affect white ethnics.

This conclusion about cultural factors is masked by an excess of sympathy for blacks and a stinginess of sympathy for white ethnics; but it is of immense social importance. Far from pitting white ethnics and blacks against each other, as affluent liberals in Newton and Brookline seem compelled to do, intelligent leaders are in a position to draw analogies, to point to similarities, to develop commonalities. There *are* differences in kind, important cultural differences, between white ethnics and blacks in Boston and elsewhere. In these matters, there can be trade-offs, deals, mutual assurances.

Both white ethnics and blacks in urban Boston, meanwhile are getting inferior education. Why add to the deflicts of busing? Cannot the superior ficiencies of both the emotional coneducation of Newton and Brookline be offered to some of the working-class Irish, Italians *and* blacks of the inner city alike?

"Impermeable barriers" are indeed keeping both white ethnics and blacks out of executive offices; positions on boards of directors; significant ownership in stocks, bonds and property; full professorships; research grants; expense-account living; and effective voice in establishing the moral tone and national diversity of the American way of life. Economically and in moral symbolism, this is still too unvarying a white Protestant country. Both white ethnics and blacks are demanding to get in, not only into the powerful symbol system but also into full economic power and status. As long as these "other Bostonians" are pitted against each other, the "proper Bostonians" continue their unbroken hegemony. Thernstrom worries about a "white ethnic backlash" without noticing that such unconscious sympathies as his may be among its chief stimulants.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 491)

was organized to serve as a Catholfc anti-defamation league, and a Catholic civil rights union. It cannot do the whole job of checking and chastening monolithic power, but American Catholics have embraced the League and have, thus far, given it the support it must have to begin to make our society pluralistic in practice as it is in rhetoric.

VIRGIL C. BLUM, S.J.
President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

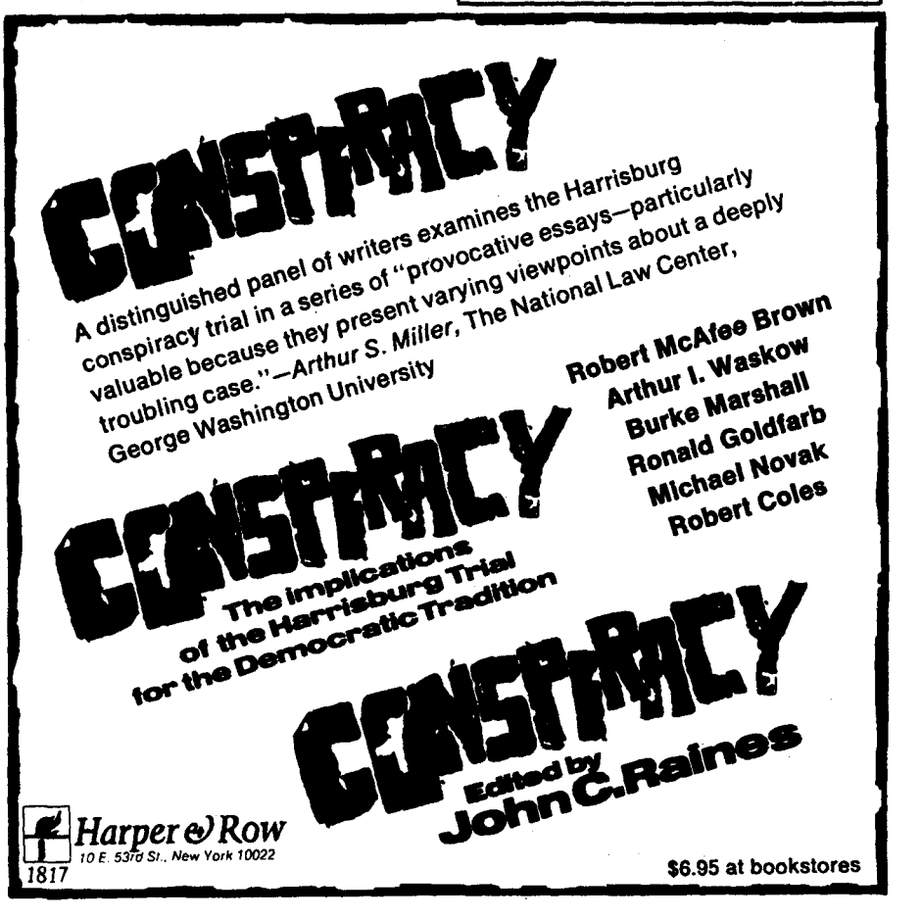
McLean, Va.

To the Editors: One may not agree with Michael Novak [June 28] that "anti-Catholic sentiment is once again on the increase" and yet concur fully with him in the assertion that "in the old days of virulent anti-Catholic conviction" *Commonweal* represented an intelligent voice capable of calming critics with its reasonable retorts.

Another voice was Arnold Lunn whose polemics were disarming to so many especially to those steeped in secularism. It is strange indeed that no mention has been made of his passing in your magazine.

MARSH CUNNINGHAM

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.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